



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

BRIEFER COMMUNICATION.

LABOR CONDITIONS IN FRANCE.

Since the completion, a few months ago, of the statistical inquiry of the *Office du Travail* into the "Wages and Hours of Labor in French Industries," there exists, for the first time, a fairly complete and accurate presentation of the actual conditions of French workmen. The report is considerably more extensive than its title suggests. It presents not only the rate of wages and hours of labor, but also a vast amount of statistical information upon methods of remuneration, employment of women and children, stability of employment, cost of living, relief, pension and insurance funds, wages in different industries, at different periods and in different parts of France, etc. The scope of the inquiry was somewhat narrowed, however, in order to exclude industry on a small scale, and such extractive industries as agriculture and forestry. The *enquête*, moreover, was extended to 2957 establishments only, although these comprised 674,000 workmen, or about one-third of all employed in industry on a large and on a medium scale. The investigation was begun and almost completed in 1891 (some of the figures are for 1893), but the last volumes of the report were not issued to the public until 1898. The report was long in the making and this gave a chance for the material collected to be well digested, clearly presented, and put into a form convenient for analysis. In the following communication I have not attempted to enter into the details of the administration of the *enquête* nor to criticise the statistical methods employed, but have merely endeavored to summarize the more important facts contained in the six volumes,* in order to give a general idea of the conditions existing in France.

Establishments Considered.

The investigation was extended to 2957 private establishments (not including transportation enterprises), the average force in them being

* Office du Travail. "*Enquête sur les Salaries et la Durée du Travail dans l'Industrie Française.*" (*Grande et Moyenne Industrie*). In four volumes and two appendices. Paris, 1893-1897 (1898). The first volume considers the industries of Paris. Volumes II and III, the industries in the provinces, and a special volume, an appendix to Volume III, the wages of the employes in state industries and railways. Volume IV presents a general resumé, and a separate volume (*album graphique*) gives these results in the form of diagrams

155 workmen, and the average horse-power, 115. The total number of employes considered was 674,000, including state enterprises and the transportation industries, or about one-third of the whole number of employes in these industries. The industries observed were found to be on an average larger in the provinces than at Paris, the average complement of men being 125 at Paris (*Département de la Seine*), and 160 in the departments, while the horse-power used was 130 in the departments, as compared with only 45 per establishment in Paris. The concerns observed were almost always joint-stock companies, employing steam, or other mechanical power. Of the total number of employes, about 3 per cent were foremen, 71 per cent workmen, 18 per cent workwomen, while 8 per cent were children and apprentices of both sexes. While the proportion of women and children was greater in Paris than in the provinces for industries connected with chemical and with food products, and less for the paper, metallic and stone-cutting industries, the same proportion of 26 per cent, or of one woman or child for every three men, obtained in the *Département de la Seine* and in the other departments. The proportion of skilled workmen is small for the preparatory (as also for the extractive industries) and is greater for industries where the product reaches its final form. The proportion of skilled workmen seems also to increase with the hardness of the substances worked upon.

Duration of Work.

The number of days worked in the establishments is on an average almost exactly equal to the number of week-days in the year, holidays excluded. The employes, however, do not work during the whole period. They lose on an average about 5 per cent of this time through sickness and regular absence, so that for those regularly employed there are about two hundred and ninety working days in the year. The normal (or habitual) working day is from ten to eleven hours in the Department of the Seine. In the provinces, more than one-fifth of the establishments employ their men habitually twelve hours per day, and in 3 per cent of all cases the men are employed more than twelve hours per day. In 6 per cent of the establishments, however, including very important metallurgical, mining and glass-blowing industries, the normal working day in the provinces is nine hours or less in duration. This does not include time for meals and repose, which is always at least an hour, and in two-fifths of all establishments more than an hour in length.

The *actual* number of hours of work varies with the industry and the period of the year. It is long for the textile workers and short

for coal and lignite miners, but for all industries the average working day may be estimated at ten and one-half hours, and two-thirds of all days worked are between ten and eleven hours in length. The working day does not vary at all from one month to another for three-fourths of all employes, and in the case of less than ten per cent of the employes is this variation two hours or more. According to the statements of the employes, no overtime is worked in one-half of all establishments, while of the remainder only one-fifth (one-tenth of the total) pay for overtime at an enhanced rate.

Stability of Employment.

The *enquête* attempted to discover, firstly, the monthly variations in the number of employes in each industry; secondly, the average variation in the various establishments of the numbers employed during the course of the year, that is, the average for all establishments between the maximum and minimum number of workmen employed; and thirdly, the average number of individual workmen who have been employed, for whatever period, in each establishment during the year.

The variation in the number of men employed in any industry depends largely upon its character. In the various industries considered it ranges from 1 to 75 per cent, but for the total of all industries, it averages only 4 per cent. The same latitude of difference is also to be observed in the average variation per establishment, which ranges from 7 per cent in the manufacture of paper, caoutchouc, etc., to 70 per cent in the building trades. For all industries, the variation during the year is 19 per cent, which shows a considerable movement from one establishment to another.

The total number of individual workmen actually employed in the various industrial establishments is from 35 to 40 per cent greater than the average number of persons employed during the year. This makes the maximum number of all employes 135 to 140 per cent of the number regularly employed, and the minimum number, 60 to 65 per cent of the average number of men employed. The *Office du Travail* estimates that there are 115 workmen for every 100 positions, of which 75 are regularly, and 40 are casually employed. Instead of 100 men working 290 days per year (29,000 days), 75 men work 295 days each (22,125 days), and 40 men average 170 days ($6800 + 22,125 = 28,925$ days).

Wages.

The average wages of all employes in the industries considered, without reference to the age, sex or situation of the employes was

1080 francs (\$216) per year, 3.75 francs (75 cents) per day, and 35.5 centimes (7.1 cents) per hour. Wages are about twice as high for men (4.20 francs) as for women (2.20 francs per day), about 50 per cent higher in Paris than in the provinces. The daily wages for men are 6.15 francs in Paris and 3.90 francs in the departments; for women, 3.00 francs in Paris and 2.10 francs in the departments.

The *enquête* does not give the number of employes receiving different scales of wages, except in the case of workmen (paid by the time) in Paris, and the employes of state industries and railways. In these cases, however, 85 per cent of the employes were found to be in receipt of wages, the difference between the maximum and minimum of which was not greater than three-fourths of the average rate of wages.

If the wages in the different industries be compared, it will be seen that the wages are higher in the industries in which the material is fashioned and finished than in those in which it is prepared or extracted. In other words, wages are higher the nearer the industry is to the finished product and the further removed from the raw material. Mining, however, forms an exception to this rule. While above ground, wages are apt to be low, where the work is difficult, dangerous, fatiguing or repulsive, the rate of wages in this extractive industry is higher than the general average for all industries (railways excepted). It may also be stated, as a general rule, that the rate of wages within a given group of industries will vary to some degree with the nearness to completion of the articles produced, a higher grade of skill being usually observed in the finishing processes. There is, however, but little difference to be noted between the wages paid by different establishments within the same industry, in the same place, there being a current price for labor, as well as for commodities. Even in such cases, however, there may be considerable variations due to differences in the policy of the establishments.

The rate of wages within the various groups does not seem to depend so much upon the length of apprenticeship, and the amount of "professional" knowledge necessary, as might be assumed. Paper-makers, shoemakers, weavers and turners often earn, after a long apprenticeship, less than simple unskilled laborers.

When the work, once learned, is mechanical and simple, the apprenticeship has rather the effect of securing the position than of raising the wages of the employe. The influence of the productivity of labor is seen in the high wages that are frequently paid to unskilled labor, applied to machines of great productive power.

The rate of wages depends, moreover, considerably more upon the constancy of the effort, and the amount of intelligence required to perform the work, than upon the length of apprenticeship of the employe.

Within the same industry there are included numerous groups of workmen, whose labor is widely divergent. In general, the wages of those employed in the principal work of the industry are higher than those of the men who are employed at work that is merely accessory and incidental to the principal production. Under accessory work are included principally maintenance and repair of buildings, tools, etc.

The wages of women are about one half of those of the men, but as a rule, their work is different. Where both sexes are employed at the same kind of work, however, the principle of "equal pay for equal work" does not apply, except in the cutting of precious stones. In this industry, women actually earn more than men (5.15 francs for women, 4.65 francs for men). About 9 per cent of all workmen and women are paid by the month, 57 per cent by the day or hour, and 36 per cent by the piece. This is about the same for Paris and the departments, but in the city the employes are paid their wages at shorter intervals. In the provinces, 42 per cent of the establishments still pay by the month; in Paris the proportion is but 15 per cent. Piecework is more prevalent among women than men, since the former are usually employed at simple and oft-repeated operations, that more readily admit of payment by the piece. Upon the whole, it seems that, for Paris at least, the wages earned for piecework are somewhat greater than those paid per unit of time.

The actual remuneration of the laborer does not depend entirely upon the rate of his wages. The amount that may be added or deducted from his wages must also be considered. In a number of the larger industries, especially in the provinces, the employe is subject to be fined for various offences to a greater or less degree. This system prevails in Paris in 6 per cent of the establishments, employing 13 per cent of the employes, and in the provinces in 22 per cent of the establishments employing 47 per cent of the employes. On the other hand, the employes of 17 per cent of the provincial establishments receive subventions in kind. This is particularly the case in industries producing articles of domestic consumption, such as coal, wood, liquor, etc. Old age pensions are very rare, and the principle of profit-sharing is not carried out to any great extent. Of the 2957 establishments visited, only 16 shared the profits of the business with the employes, while allowing

them access to the books of the firm, but in the case of 110 other concerns, considerable sums were regularly distributed in the form of gratuities. Insurance against accidents, especially in industries involving considerable risk, is quite general. The employers have also created relief funds, which are open to about one-half of the workmen, while a large proportion of the remainder are affiliated with friendly societies, which pursue the same aim. Pension funds, however, have not been established in a general manner by more than two or three per cent of the establishments and not more than ten per cent of the employes possess the opportunity of obtaining a pension.

Wages and Duration of Work as Affected by the Importance of the Establishment.

The evident tendency of the large establishment to survive and grow at the expense of the smaller ones, and the vast revolution which is being effected in consequence of this tendency, renders a study of the relative advantage that is offered by industry on a large, and by industry on a small scale of more than merely statistical interest. Presumably on the principle that the difference between future and present industrial conditions is foreshadowed in the difference between the conditions at present existing in the large and the small industries, the *Office du Travail* has made a comparison of the conditions of labor as affected by the size of the establishment. In Paris, the comparison is not so successful, since that city is not the natural field for production on a large scale, and with the exception of articles of superior quality, etc., is destined to see the large industries emigrate to the country. But in the provinces, where staples are manufactured and where the industries are more homogeneous, a considerable improvement is to be observed in the conditions of the laboring classes. Not only in mining, metallurgy and in railway work, but in a number of other industries conducted on a large scale, hours are shorter, employment more regular and wages higher than in the industries on a small scale. Thus to take but one of a large number of instances, the daily wages of all miners were 4.90 francs in establishments employing over 1000, 4.45 francs in establishments with 500 to 999 men, 4.05 francs with 100 to 499 men, 3.85 francs with 25 to 99 men, and 2.40 francs with less than 25 men. The instability of employment (the per cent of difference between the greatest and smallest number of persons employed) was between 33 and 34 per cent for all industries employing less than 100 persons each, but sinks rapidly with the increase in size of the establishments, until

it is only 10 per cent for concerns with over 1000 employes. While in the industries with less than 25 employes the working day is eleven hours, it is only nine and one-quarter hours in industries with over 1000 workmen. In the opinion of the *Office*, therefore, these economic advantages compensate the workman for a certain "*contrainte morale*," which the work in the great factory imposes.

Territorial Variation in Wages.

As there is a difference in wages between Paris and the departments, so are there variations to be observed among the departments themselves. The report divides the whole of France into seven groups, according to the rate of wages there prevailing. It will be seen that wages are highest in the *Département de la Seine* (Paris), group I, somewhat smaller in the neighboring *Département de Seine-et-Oise*, and gradually decline until they reach their lowest level in some of the Departments of Brittany, the Southwest and Centre. The following table will also show a correspondence between high wages on the one hand and density of population, preponderance of urban population and high ground rents upon the other:

GROUPS OF DEPARTMENTS.	USUAL RATE OF WAGES.		Number of inhabitants per square kilometer (.385 square miles).	Proportion of urban to total population—per cent.	RENTAL VALUE OF DISTRICT.	
	Unskilled workmen.	Skilled workmen.			Per taxpayer.	Per inhabitant.
	<i>francs.</i>	<i>francs.</i>			<i>francs.</i>	<i>francs.</i>
First group (Seine)	5.00	7.50	6607	99	974	180
Second group (Seine-et-Oise) . .	3.60	6.10	112	39	363	114
Third group	3.35	4.50	106	50	221	64
Fourth group	3.00	4.00	73	37	152	44
Fifth group	2.75	3.90	59	29	123	35
Sixth group	2.50	3.50	61	24	109	29
Seventh group	2.20	3.10	58	18	93	22
All departments except that of the Seine (Paris, group I.) . .	2.75	3.75	66	31	144	39
All departments	3.00	4.05	72	37	182	50

Cost of Living.

The *Office du Travail*, in its attempt to make comparisons of the cost of living in various parts of France, was forced, in the absence of reliable data on certain elements of expense (particularly rent) to employ a combination of methods. The *Office*, therefore, made use of a series of typical workingmen's budgets, considered the wholesale prices for food paid by hospitals, colleges, etc., in various districts, and finally attempted to obtain an approximation of the workingman's cost of living by deducting the rate of wages, with board and lodging included, from the rate of wages without board and lodging. Without criticising these methods, it may be said that, according to the calculation based upon them, the average amount paid for board and lodging by the unmarried workman is 2.10 francs a day, which is about two-thirds of his daily earnings. It also appears that the cost of living is lower where wages are lower, but that the difference in wages between various districts is considerably greater than the difference in the cost of living. This is not unnatural, however, when we consider that what is here included under the term cost of living forms a smaller part of the standard of life in the great cities than in the small villages of the provinces. The following table, in a somewhat different form, is to be found in the fourth volume of the Report (page 260):

GROUPS.	RATE OF WAGES IN PER CENT OF GROUP I.		COST OF LIVING IN PER CENT OF GROUP I. ACCORDING TO THREE METHODS OF CALCULATION.		
	Of unskilled workmen.	Of skilled workmen.	First method.*	Second method.†	Third method.‡
I	100	100	100	100	100
II	72	91	91	91	100
III	67	60	77	74	83
IV	60	53	75	72	75
V	55	52	75	67	70
VI	50	47	71	68	68
VII	44	41	72	68	52

Variation in Wages During the Last Half Century.

A satisfactory comparison of the conditions of labor of to-day with those of fifty years ago can not be made for France, owing to the absence of reliable statistics on the hours of labor and the stability of employment in former periods. For the rate of wages, however,

* Estimating an annual consumption of 2000 kilograms of bread.

† Estimating an annual consumption of 1000 kilograms of bread.

‡ Estimated from the amount deducted from wages for free board and lodging.

there exist a series of former *enquêtes*; the industrial investigations of 1840-45 and 1860-65, and the more special *enquêtes* of 1853, 1857 and 1871 to 1885, and a mass of other material. These figures show that the money wages of employes have almost doubled in the case of men and more than doubled in the case of women during the last fifty years.

Daily Wages in France.

	1840-45	1853-57	1860-65	1874	1891-93
All workmen in provinces	2.07	. . . .	2.76	. . . .	3.90
All workwomen in provinces	1.02	. . . .	1.30	. . . .	2.15
Coal, lignite, etc., miners (<i>de combustibles, minéraux</i>)	2.10	2.35	2.60	3.56	4.20
Masons (in provinces) . . . . .	. . . .	2.25	. . . .	3.15	4.05
Masons (at Paris)	4.15	4.25	5.25	5.50	7.50

This table shows us the increase in money wages, but it is necessary to know the purchasing power of the money received during the different periods in order to know whether there has been an actual increase of wages. The statistical report furnishes a comparison of prices paid during fifty years by hospitals, etc., for the articles entering into the consumption of the provincial working families, and while these prices are thus frequently wholesale, instead of retail, it is hardly probable that the whole calculation is thereby vitiated. It seems from these figures that while rents have more than doubled during the last fifty years, the cost of food and lodging has increased only about 25 per cent, and the cost of food, lodging and clothing (in the same amount and of the same quality) has increased less than 25 per cent. Thus while the French workman of to-day receives almost 200 per cent of the wages of fifty years ago, he need spend but 125 per cent of what was spent by his predecessor of fifty years ago for his food, lodging and clothing. As a matter of course, the expenditure of the workman has kept pace with his increased wages, as may be seen from the immense increase in the consumption of cheap luxuries, as well as in the interesting fact that the amount deducted from money wages for board and lodging has increased at the same rate as wages themselves, and bears the same proportion to wages now as it did fifty years ago. While it is therefore impossible in the absence of figures to speak very precisely about the change in the hours of labor or in the stability of employment, it can be stated quite definitely that both the money and the real wages of French workmen have considerably increased during the last half-century.

University of Pennsylvania.

WALTER E. WEYL